

AMENDED IN SENATE AUGUST 30, 2011

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 27, 2011

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2011–12 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 69

Introduced by Assembly Member Beall
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Ammiano, Butler, Fuentes, and Swanson)

December 15, 2010

An act to add Section 18924 to the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 69, as amended, Beall. Senior nutrition benefits.

Existing federal law provides for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in California as CalFresh (formerly the Food Stamp program), under which nutrition assistance benefits formerly referred to as food stamps, allocated to the state by the federal government, are distributed to eligible individuals by each county. Under existing law, the State Department of Social Services administers CalFresh at the state level, and has certain specified duties in that regard.

This bill, *commencing July 1, 2012*, would require the State Department of Social Services, to the extent permitted by federal law or other specified federal authority, to allow counties that satisfy certain criteria to simplify enrollment into CalFresh for potentially eligible low-income social security benefit recipients, utilizing existing information maintained by the Social Security Administration regarding these recipients. The bill would specify the department's duties in support of the enrollment efforts described in the bill.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (a) Good nutrition is important for all Californians, especially
4 for seniors, who may suffer from diet-related diseases, may require
5 food with medication, or who are trying to maintain independence.

6 (b) The University of California at Los Angeles estimates that
7 approximately half a million older Californians living alone are
8 unable to make ends meet.

9 (c) Seniors on a fixed income find it difficult to afford nutritious
10 food.

11 (d) The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
12 (SNAP), administered in California as CalFresh, should help many
13 of these vulnerable seniors to meet their nutrition needs. However,
14 only 10 percent of eligible seniors in California participate in the
15 CalFresh program.

16 (e) In California, only 5 percent of social security recipients
17 eligible for CalFresh participate in the program.

18 (f) The federal Social Security Administration has information
19 that could help easily enroll eligible seniors for CalFresh benefits.
20 A partnership between the state and the Social Security
21 Administration to develop a more streamlined approach to enrolling
22 this population is needed.

23 (g) Many states have worked with the Social Security
24 Administration to establish Combined Application Projects (CAPs)
25 for other elderly populations, suggesting that similar action for
26 social security recipients may be successful.

27 (h) Enrolling more seniors into CalFresh not only draws more
28 federal nutrition benefits to California, but also stimulates the
29 economy. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates
30 that every dollar in SNAP benefits generates \$1.73 in economic
31 activity.

32 SEC. 2. Section 18924 is added to the Welfare and Institutions
33 Code, to read:

34 18924. (a) To the extent permitted by federal law, waiver,
35 demonstration project, or other federal authority, the department

1 shall allow counties to utilize existing information maintained by
2 the federal Social Security Administration regarding low-income
3 social security benefit recipients, to simplify enrollment into the
4 CalFresh program administered pursuant to this chapter, provided
5 that an interested county has either the existing capacity to receive
6 that information, or the ability to adapt its existing automation
7 systems without ~~costs or~~ significant changes *or costs to the state*
8 *or county*.

9 (b) The department shall support enrollment efforts pursuant to
10 this section by doing all of the following:

11 (1) Working with the Social Security Administration to target
12 social security recipients 60 years of age and older whose income
13 and other factors are likely to qualify them for aid through
14 CalFresh.

15 (2) Developing a streamlined application and simplified
16 enrollment process for likely eligible recipients, which may include
17 strategies used by other states to reduce paperwork and increase
18 federal nutrition benefits, including, but not limited to,
19 self-certification of key eligibility factors, standardization of
20 benefits and deductions, and automation of the application process.

21 (3) Seeking waivers, grants, or other federal authority and
22 support necessary to implement this section.

23 (c) *This section shall become operative on July 1, 2012.*